

THE GRAND THEME OF THE CHRISTIAN PREACHER,

A

SERMON

DELIVERED AT THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH

IN BOSTON,

AT THE ORDINATION OF THE

REV. BENJAMIN B. WISNER

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The following sermon was preached at the Ordination of the Rev. Alonzo Phillips in Princeton, Mass. June 7, 1820, and at the Ordination of the Rev. Samuel Green, in Reading, Sept. 20, 1820. In compliance with repeated requests from the church in both those places, the Author had promised to publish the sermon, and had just begun to prepare the copy for the press, when, through the ordering of divine providence, it unexpectedly fell to his lot to preach, with but a short previous notice, at the ordination of the Rev. Mr. Wisner.

SERMON.

1 COR. II. 2.

FOR I DETERMINED NOT TO KNOW ANY THING AMONG YOU, SAVE JESUS
CHRIST, AND HIM CRUCIFIED.

THESE words disclose to us the very heart of the Apostle respecting his great work, as a minister of Christ. He had been familiarly acquainted with all the rites of the Jewish religion, and had shown them the respect of a constant and punctual observance. He had been acquainted with the doctrines of the Pharisees, and, by his own experience, had learned all that was salutary in their effects on the mind. He had been acquainted too with whatever was of any worth in the morality and theology of the Gentiles. But when he went to preach to the Corinthians, he determined to know nothing, but *Jesus Christ and him crucified*.

We are not to suppose, brethren, that the Apostle, in executing this determination, confined his preaching to the single fact, that Jesus of Nazareth died on the cross. Undoubtedly he preached the same system of religion in

one place, as in another; and taught the same doctrines, substantially, in his preaching, as in his writings. These two things being admitted, we can easily determine what he meant by confining himself thus exclusively to Jesus Christ and him crucified. The doctrine of the cross was the basis of the religion he preached; had an inseparable connexion with all its peculiar doctrines, and an influence upon all its precepts; and gave christianity its distinguishing character. Accordingly, the Apostle's determination was, as we know his practice was, not only to announce the simple truth, that Christ was crucified, but, as connected with this, to teach all the doctrines and all the duties of the christian religion.

It is in obedience to an unexpected call of divine providence, that I address you, my respected hearers, on this interesting and auspicious occasion. And I should think myself happy indeed, could I address you in a manner worthy of the subject I have chosen, and of the solemnities in which we are here engaged. But I indulge the persuasion, that you will receive with candour, what I shall offer you in sincerity. I well know where I stand, and what distinguished ministers of Christ, from generation to generation, have preached to this beloved church, that momentous, holy doctrine, which my text has introduced to your notice. I know too in whose name I speak, and to whom I must give account. Impressed with such considerations as these, I shall proceed to illustrate as justly as I am able, *the high obligation of all ministers of the gospel to adopt the same*

resolution with the Apostle, as to the grand theme of their preaching.

The Apostle lived indeed almost two thousand years ago, and the circumstances of the world are now, in many respects, very different from what they were then. But truth is always the same. Amid all the changes which have taken place in the world, God is the same ; and as to the principal traits of his character, as well as his most important relations, man is the same. There must therefore be substantially the same reasons, why ministers should now adopt the determination of Paul, declared in the text, as there was in the first age of christianity.

The general reason by which I shall evince the propriety of this determination, is, that *the doctrine of Christ crucified is so important, that it is justly entitled to be made the principal theme of the Christian preacher.*

My design is to show that this doctrine is highly important, first, in itself ; secondly, on account of its relation to the character and government of God, and to the ruin and recovery of man ; and thirdly, on account of its moral influence.

FIRST. The doctrine is important and interesting *in itself.* When the Apostles went forth from Judea, and told the wonderful story of the sufferings and death of the Son of God ; it must have produced feelings of the high-

est astonishment. It is equally astonishing now. It has lost none of its importance, and none of its power to excite an interest in the human mind. It has indeed been long known in the world. But to the man who begins to apprehend things aright, it is always new. And however long we may have heard it preached, and however well we may have understood it ; it is always interesting to us, —more and more interesting, the more it is known. While reading the history of Christ's sufferings ; while hearing the doctrine of the cross preached ; and while attending that holy ordinance, in which his death is set forth ; Christians frequently feel an interest like what they would feel, if the gospel were now for the first time proclaimed, or if the scene of Christ's sufferings were actually before their eyes.

I say, the simple truth, that *the Son of God died on the cross*, has a greatness which astonishes. For we are to consider, my brethren, who was that glorious personage, whom the Scriptures reveal as THE SON OF GOD ; that it was he, *who was before all things, by whom all things were made, and by whom all things consist* ; *he, whom all the angels worship* ; *he who is over all, God blessed forever.** What could be more astonishing, than to see a being of such preeminent dignity, in such a condition ! The Sun in the firmament could not shine, when he who formed its light, was dying on the cross.

* See Col. i. 16, 17. John i. 3. Heb. i. 6. Rom. ix. 5.

The earth trembled to see him on whose power it rested, suspended in disgrace. With these indications of the natural world agree the feelings of the human mind. Who can, without strong emotions, contemplate the scene on Calvary, where one, so exalted and glorious, descended so low, and where one, so innocent and holy, suffered so much, and suffered in such a manner! Be it so that we have heard of it and spoken of it a thousand times. Its importance remains the same. It is and always must be, a great, astonishing event, that the son of God suffered and died. Is the death of a king or the fall of an empire thought to be a great event, and worthy of public notice? But how trifling and insignificant is such an event, compared with the crucifixion of the son of God, the SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD.

SECONDLY. Our doctrine is highly important on account of *its relation to the character and government of God, and to the ruin and recovery of man.*

Its first and most interesting relation is to the *divine character*. There can be nothing, my hearers, in the whole circle of knowledge, that is of any importance, compared with the knowledge of the everlasting God. To such creatures as we are, it is the most momentous of all inquiries; *What is the character of JEHOVAH? What is the disposition of that Being, in whose hand our life is, and who has power to save and to destroy? And what are we to expect from the administration of his government?* These inquiries respecting

the moral perfections of God are answered far more clearly and perfectly by the Cross of Christ, than by all the creation. The heavens and the earth do indeed declare his glory. But they speak a language feeble and obscure, compared with what we hear from Calvary. "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." The invisible God has here revealed himself. He has chosen this method, above all others, to make known his spotless holiness, his immutable justice, his abounding mercy.

A world rebels against its Creator. A world is lost. A world is to be saved; and to be saved by God himself, who only has either a right to propose the salvation of sinners, or power to effect it. But the world that is to be saved, must not be left in ignorance of the God who saves, or of the manner in which he saves. It must be known what are the feelings of God respecting the law which has been broken, the authority which has been disregarded, and the iniquity which has been committed. An act of infinite mercy is to be accomplished in behalf of transgressors. But they must not be left to put a wrong construction upon that act of mercy, or to misrepresent or injure the character of him who shows mercy. Preparatory to the exercise of mercy towards a rebellious world, there must be a developement of God's character; such a developement, as will forever prevent the possibility of their supposing, that his pure eye can behold iniquity; or that he can give any countenance to sin; or that he is wanting in justice,

or holiness, or truth, or any other attribute of a perfect moral Governour.

All this was effected by the death of the Lord Jesus. When we behold him, who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, and dying on the cross for us ; we see that the eternal God is just. We see that he perfectly hates sin, while he loves the immortal souls of sinners. O, what manner of love ! And O, what manner of justice ! A wise father may interpose in some case of disorder in his house, and exercise such a mixture of authority and tenderness, of justice and benevolence, that his household will say, they never knew his character before. And in a time of rebellion in an empire, a king, who has before been known by his subjects only at a distance, may exhibit himself to them in such an act of wisdom and benevolence, —may evince such a regard to the public good, such justice and equity, and yet such gentleness and forgiveness, as will produce higher esteem and admiration for him in the hearts of his people, than has been produced by any other act of his government. And in the history of his life, that act of wisdom and goodness will always be adverted to, as forming the prominent feature of his reign, and as illustrating what was before obscure, and adding new beauty to what was amiable, in his whole character.*

* As the Author, just before writing this sermon, had read, with peculiar satisfaction, the Discourses of Chalmers, he was almost insensibly led, in a few places, to adopt something of that writer's phraseology and mode of illustration.

In the work of redemption, the King eternal has accomplished a work of such wisdom, and righteousness, and goodness. This work makes the clearest manifestation of what is in the heart of God, and so is in the highest degree glorious. But all the glory of redemption shines with its purest, brightest lustre, in the cross of Christ. So that, whoever would obtain the most exalted views of God's moral glory, must fix his eyes on Calvary. And if any man undertakes to describe the character of God, without a primary respect to the cross of Christ, he omits the grand display of that character; he conceals the principal feature of its excellence.

These remarks rest not on abstract speculation, but on plain fact. The humble Christian, who studies the doctrine of the cross, gets better views of the moral perfection of God, than can be derived from the whole creation. Though he may know but little else; he knows that which nothing can equal in excellence. He may indeed confine his attention to the region of Calvary. But Calvary is infinitely dear to angels and men. It is illuminated with more of the lustre of divine excellence, than all the earth beside; and the knowledge, which can be had of God in every other way, is foolishness, compared with what is learned from the cross.

In order to obtain an adequate view of this subject, we must consider too, that the grand movement of divine wisdom, exhibited on Calvary, though it occupied so short

a time, will be followed by everlasting consequences. It stood in connexion with all the subsequent conduct of God respecting human beings. It gave a new aspect to his whole administration toward this revolted province of his empire. It was the beginning of an endless series of divine acts, which will continually reflect new lustre on the divine character. Millions of ages hence, intelligent creatures will see, that the highest and most endearing manifestations of the goodness of God have a reference to Christ crucified. From that event resulted measures in the divine government, before unknown. A glory unspeakable; a glory exceeding in splendour and endearment all other glory; a glory, which will be viewed with increasing delight forever, began to shine forth in the cross of Christ.

But we must consider, a little more particularly, the importance of this doctrine on account of its relation to *the law and government of God*. The law has been violated. All men are transgressors. The world lieth in wickedness. The law pronounces a curse upon them, and dooms them to perpetual banishment from the presence of God. The law is holy, and just, and good, and God is its almighty Vindicator and Guardian. Here we behold the device of infinite wisdom. God looks upon perishing sinners with compassion, and determines to provide salvation for them. And that this may be done without degrading the honour of his law, and without yielding any one principle of his righteous government, he

sends his only begotten Son to die in their stead. By this wonderful expedient, he vindicates the law, without executing its penalty. By this he makes known his righteousness as Lawgiver and Judge, while he shows all the tenderness of pity, and all the fulness of grace, as a father and friend to sinners. And now, when we look upon the transaction on Calvary, we see, that, while transgressors are pardoned, the divine law is supported. We see that the justice of God never bends, and knows no compromise. We are impressed with the majesty of that government, which is thus watchfully and effectually guarded, by an omniscient and almighty God. We behold the awful unchangeableness of that just penalty of the law, which cannot be given up, even in favour of God's only begotten Son. In short the intelligent creation see it written in living characters on the cross of Christ, that the law is just and good; that God is its omnipotent friend, and will give eternal efficacy to its principles. And I must add, that this manifestation of the justice and immutability of the law, and this vindication of its honour, is greatly superior to any other, which has come to the knowledge of man. It is superior, because, though it has all the dreadful severity of a direct execution, it is mingled with unparalleled kindness and grace. It invests the moral government of God, with an awful majesty, which makes all its subjects tremble, and at the same time with a benignity and tenderness, which attract their highest love and confidence. From the memorable day, on which the Son of God was crucified, that holy government was established

on a basis never to be moved ; all its principles were rendered gloriously efficacious, and all its ends perfectly secured. Henceforth there can be no doubt in the universe, that the Lawgiver is just and good, and no expectation of impunity in sin. However the grace of God may abound in the salvation of rebels, no one can ever think that God's grace, thus exercised, tarnishes the beauty or lessens the authority of his righteous law.

The importance of our doctrine will appear also, from its relation to *man*,—to his ruin by *sin*, and his salvation by grace. In the moral state of man, we find the only occasion of Christ's sufferings. The obvious conclusion is, that man must have been sunk low in guilt and ruin, to need such a movement in the divine administration, for his deliverance ; that the barrier, which excluded him from heaven, was indeed a mighty barrier, to require such an effort of infinite compassion and infinite power to remove it. When we look to the cross, and see the blessed Immanuel suffering and dying for men, we are as well satisfied what their character is, and what they deserve at the hand of justice, as if we should see them enduring, in their own persons, the dreadful weight of divine wrath. Indeed, the evidence here given of our guilt and wretchedness is stronger, than could be given, by the literal execution of the penalty of the law. He who looks to Calvary, beholds a mightier and more astonishing event in the divine government, an indication of deeper guilt in our race, and a clearer display of the abhorrence with which

God regards our conduct, than if he should look into the world of misery, where sinful men suffer their own just desert. Whatever difficulties may attend this subject, it is undoubtedly a matter of fact, that the most heart-affecting views, which men ever obtain, of their own woful apostacy, and of their criminal, wretched, helpless state, are derived from the contemplation of the cross of Christ.

This doctrine has an inseparable connexion with the salvation of sinners; with their forgiveness, their sanctification, and their eternal happiness in heaven. When we behold Christ dying for sinners; we are at once satisfied, that they may obtain salvation. His death is an expression of God's mercy towards them. And then the animating conclusion of the Apostle follows; "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" He who performed the greatest possible act of benevolence, must surely be willing to perform all other benevolent acts. We here see not only a public proof of the readiness of God to show mercy, but the manner in which that mercy can be exercised, consistently with the order and happiness of his moral kingdom. We see that God can be just, while he justifies those who believe; that a crucified Saviour procured pardon, and the spirit of sanctification, and all needed blessings for time and eternity; in a word, that the sacrifice of Christ has put salvation within the reach of all the world, and actually secures it to all who repent.

THIRDLY. Our doctrine is highly important on account of its *moral tendency*.

It plainly results from the nature of the doctrine, that it must have a mighty influence upon the human mind. There is nothing which can produce actions of a moral nature in men, but motives, or rational considerations. If we would produce any affection or action in men, considered as moral agents, we direct their views to moral objects. We tell them, that their glorious Creator has given them a law to regulate their actions ; that he abhors sin, and will pour out his wrath upon those who commit it ; that he loves holiness, and will reward it with eternal life ; that he is a being of infinite benevolence, and by administering a righteous government, will promote the endless happiness of his kingdom. These, and similar considerations we always exhibit, to sway the conduct of men. These are the motives, which are suited to influence, and actually do influence moral agents. Now if these motives, as they are presented by a moral government in its simplest form, are suited to influence moral agents ; much more, when they are presented in the doctrine of the cross. It is no difficult task to convince men, by natural reason, that God is just and good, and that he will maintain a righteous government by rewarding the obedient, and punishing the disobedient. They often are convinced of all this, and acknowledge it. And they ought to acknowledge it with deep veneration and love. But in the minds of apostate men, no vener-

ation or love can be found. They contemplate the divine perfections and government without emotion. Their moral feelings are benumbed by sin; and not only the displays of God in the natural world, but the blackness and darkness and tempest of Sinai leave them stupidly inattentive. But the justice and goodness of God, and the paramount authority of his law, as exhibited in Christ's death, acquire a new and irresistible power. They arrest the attention of sinners, and make them tremble at the prospect of a future retribution. But this is not all. The doctrine of the cross does more than awaken sinners, and make them tremble. It shows them the infinite compassion of God. It shows them that their sins may be pardoned; that God is a kind, forgiving father, ready to embrace them in the arms of his mercy, and notwithstanding all their rebellion, to make them heirs of glory. Such a display of divine love melts the heart, and leads to repentance.

This, brethren, I say, is not imagination or conjecture, but fact. In the various instances of repentance which take place in this apostate world, it will be found, that the grand considerations, which the Holy Spirit usually employs, to influence sinners, are derived from the cross of Christ. The divine truths, which are made instrumental in forming them to a new character, are those which are comprised in the doctrine of Christ crucified. And the same divine truths are the motives, which control the affections and lives of believers. When they look to

the cross of Christ, they behold those manifestations of the righteousness and benevolence of God, which most powerfully stimulate them to seek higher degrees of every christian grace. And so by the cross of Christ, the world is crucified to them, and they to the world. It is this, which frees them from the dominion of sin, subdues their worldly spirit, kindles gratitude and zeal, gives them hope when they are ready to despond, fortifies them against temptation, and by degrees conforms their whole character to the perfect standard of God's law.

Such is the practical influence, which the doctrine of the cross has possessed and ever will possess over the minds of men. Accordingly we should never cease to employ the doctrine, as the grand instrument of moving their affections, and guiding their conduct. There is really no other view of divine things, which is suited to have any decisive influence upon the human mind, or is likely to be of any certain efficacy in promoting the cause of virtue and piety in the world. This is the grand secret of a spiritual, holy life. And let me say, brethren, this doctrine has the greatest effect, when alone,—unincumbered by any means which human wisdom can devise. Whatever is to be accomplished in the christian life, the cross of Christ is the means. If then I should behold any of my fellow christians ready to indulge the love of the world, or pride, or any sinful feeling, or to do any sinful action; I would not go about to dissuade them by argu-

ments, which unassisted reason suggests. No. I would direct them to something of more certain efficacy ; to something that affords a deeper remedy. I would say to them, look up and see the cross. There see the holiness, and justice, and love of God. There see the excellence of his law, the evil of sin, the worth of the soul. See every thing, that can affect, and melt, and purify the heart, and make sin, in all its forms, an object of detestation. This, christians, is the great argument I would employ, to check the power of temptation, and to strengthen and elevate every christian virtue. And if this does not prevail, nothing will. Brethren, if the human race are ever to be turned from their iniquities, and brought to love and obey their Creator, it must be by the influence of this doctrine. There is no other way. Every attempt we may make to impress the minds of men with real holiness, or to regulate their moral actions, will come to nothing, unless we present the doctrine of Christ crucified clearly before them, and bring them to feel its transforming power. Here human reason and philosophy are of no account. He who uses them to save men from sin, uses them in vain. *Christ crucified is the power of God to salvation.*

But on this occasion I ought to show particularly, how ministers of the gospel are likely to be affected by the doctrine of the cross. What then was its influence upon the Apostle himself? This will appear, if you consider the difference between his character before he knew Christ, and his character after. Paul was once proud and

malignant, a persecutor, a murderer. But his knowledge of Christ crucified had a sovereign power to subdue his pride and malice, and to beget in him deep humility, ardent desire for the glory of God, and a willingness to endure all things for the salvation of men. From the happy hour that he first knew the doctrine of the cross, he lived another life. Under the animating, comforting influence of this doctrine, he endured labours and sufferings, not to be described, for the salvation of sinners. And has the cross of Christ lost that sovereign virtue, which it had in the primitive ages? Is it not able to produce the same effects now, as it did then? There is not a single disorder of our hearts, brethren which it cannot remedy. There is no christian or ministerial virtue, which it cannot help us to attain; and no duty, which it cannot strengthen us to perform. If we make Christ crucified the great subject of our faith, and of our preaching; if we hold it in such estimation, that we can say, *we know nothing else*; it will fill us with the fruits of righteousness. It will bring all the motives to love, and purity, and universal goodness, to exert their highest energy upon us. It will adorn and elevate our character, and render us extensively useful to the church of Christ.

If we adopt the determination to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified, it will fix our eye steadily upon *an example of consummate excellence*. And such an example must, in all respects, have the most salutary influence. Can it be that christians will allow themselves

in sin, while their eye is fixed on one who was holy, harmless, undefiled? Can we indulge pride in our hearts, while daily conversant with one so humble? Can we seek the world's honour, while we behold the King of glory covered with shame? What music can it be to our ears, to hear the praises of our worthless names mingle themselves with the reproaches cast upon our blessed Lord? While we have before our eyes that beloved Saviour, who became poor for our sakes, and counted all earthly pleasures as the dust under his feet, can we give ourselves up to the pursuit of riches and pleasures? With such an example of patience and silent meekness before us, can we indulge an impatient, resentful temper? or a spirit of anger and revenge, with an example of such compassion and forgiveness? Can we foster a spirit of censoriousness, bitterness, and contention, when we behold in our Lord such quietness, and gentleness, and candour? Can we seek to gratify any grovelling desire, or pursue any worthless interest, when we see our Saviour and Guide setting his heart upon an object so excellent, as the eternal glory of God, and the salvation of a ruined world? And can we ever shrink back from sufferings, or be discouraged by difficulties, when we behold an example of resolution, which yielded to no difficulties, but kept fast hold of its object, even amid the sufferings of the garden and the cross?

Suppose a minister of the gospel were to be habitually conversant by faith with the crucified Saviour, and

were to have before him, from day to day, the astonishing exhibition he made of the love, the holiness, and the justice of God, the wretched condition of sinners, and the divine grace which abounds in their salvation. Suppose he were to study, and preach, and visit his flock, and perform all his ministerial duties, with Christ crucified in lively view. What effect would it have upon him? With what spirit would he pursue his studies? In what manner would he preach, and converse, and visit the people of his charge? How would he treat immortal souls, perishing in sin? and the church redeemed by precious blood?—O! that we could see the power of the cross more fully displayed in our own ministry, and in that of all who sustain the sacred office.

I have now endeavoured to exhibit the vast importance of our doctrine, first, in itself; secondly, on account of its relation to the character and government of God, and to the ruin and recovery of man; and thirdly, on account of its influence on the hearts and lives of Christians. All this importance of the doctrine, to which you have for a short time turned your thoughts, but which is in truth above our highest conceptions, I have urged as a reason for our adopting the same determination with the Apostle, and making Christ crucified the grand theme of our preaching.

The subject, on which I have now ventured to speak, has, I am sensible, a depth, which the understanding of

an apostle could not fathom—a length, and breadth, and height, surpassing the knowledge even of an angel. On this stupendous subject I have, with entire frankness, expressed to you the best views I have been able to attain. Permit me now, brethren, with equal frankness, to exhibit some of those reflections, which the subject and the occasion naturally suggest.

1. It seems impossible to discuss such a subject as this, without reflecting on the great mistake of those ministers, who substitute any thing whatever, for the doctrine of Christ crucified; who make it their business to inculcate a superficial morality, or a metaphysical theology, or something else, which results from the light of mere human reason, and only subserves the welfare of human society; or who put some part of christianity in the place of Christ crucified, or at least, teach the Christian religion in such a manner, that the doctrine of the cross is never made prominent, and no one would ever suppose from their mode of treating it, that it was a doctrine of any consequence in the system. Those to whom these remarks apply, never advert to the fact of Christ's death, or to the atonement he made, or to any part of his great work, as being fundamental in the system of divine truth? The death of Christ has never taken hold on their feelings, as a measure of preeminent glory in the divine administration. They can say all they have to say, on the character of God and of man, on the principles of the divine law, on the mercy of God, and on all other subjects, which

come within the compass of their preaching, without ever referring to the doctrine of the cross, as of any material consequence. Perhaps they may name the thing; but their views and their preaching are very nearly what they would be, if it were wholly left out, and wholly forgotten.

Now, brethren, would you turn away the eyes of men from the highest display; ever yet made, of the moral excellence of God? Would you render them insensible to the clearest manifestations of their own guilt and wretchedness, and hinder them from accepting the method, which the Sovereign of the world has chosen, to extend mercy to sinners? Would you blot out the distinguishing glory of the gospel, and deprive it of that which constitutes its chief worth in the eyes of angels and men?—If you would do all this, then pass by the doctrine of the cross, and make up your system of religious instruction, both as to faith and practice, without regard to the blood of Christ. This will effectually blunt the edge of divine truth, so that it shall give no wound to the consciences of men. This will prevent the conviction and trembling fear of the wicked. This will make the gospel such, that men may hear it from year to year, and from age to age, and yet remain in the unbroken slumber of spiritual death.

But O brethren, partakers of this high and heavenly calling, if you have the holy desire of seeing the eter-

nal God glorified ; then behold yourselves, and exhibit to others, the scene of Calvary, where the glory of all God's attributes shines forth with its purest lustre. If you cherish the feelings of loyal subjects, and desire that the law of God may be vindicated and honoured in the view of intelligent creatures, and may be maintained in all its authority and influence ; then exhibit the cross of Christ, which effectually supports the law, and secures it from dishonour, while its penalty is remitted in behalf of the penitent.— When you behold that spectacle, which is so interesting and moving to the true minister of Christ, the spectacle of a sinner filled with shame and distress, ready to sink under the weight of his guilt, and struggling to get release from the bondage of corruption; if you would point him to the only source of hope, and deliverance, and joy, point him to the blood of Christ. If you would see men adorned with holiness ; exhibit that doctrine, which contains the most powerful motives to holiness. Exhibit all the truths and precepts of religion, in close alliance with the doctrine of the cross, and as deriving from it their principal efficacy. This doctrine, if the apostle's judgment may be relied upon, is the grand principle in the system of christianity. Leave out this, and the whole system, as to its character and tendency, is radically a different thing.

Consider, then, Secondly, the essential loss, occasioned by that theology, which sets aside the doctrine of Christ crucified, and lays down the moral precepts of the Bible, or a part of them, as constituting the christian religion.

This lax system occasions great loss to those ministers who embrace it, by depriving them of the happiness of present success, and clouding their prospect of a future reward. It occasions great loss to immortal souls, by withholding that doctrine, which God has appointed to be the principal means of converting them from sin ; by refusing to teach them the only way of life, and leaving them either to a guilty quiet, or a hopeless sorrow. It occasions great loss to the church, by obscuring its glory, and taking away the means of its increase. And it occasions loss to the christian religion, by expunging its characteristic excellence, and by distorting and deranging those features of truth which it may suffer to remain. Now is all this a matter of no moment ? Can we look with indifference upon the prevalence of that theology, which would turn away our eyes from the cross of Christ ? Can we think it a small evil, which should give us no uneasiness ? No, brethren ; it is an evil of alarming magnitude ; an evil which threatens desolation to the church ; an evil which extends its fatal influence into eternity. It robs our holy religion of its efficacy and glory. It dishonours God, by concealing or undervaluing the brightest display of his moral perfections. It hinders, or strives to hinder the salvation of sinners. By taking away the only successful instrument of bringing men to obey the gospel, it cuts off all prospect of extending the reign of Christ. Such, brethren, in my serious apprehension, is the evil occasioned by the prevalence of

any scheme of religion, whatever may be its form, and whatever other truths it may seem to maintain, if it denies or omits the doctrine of Christ crucified. Wherever any scheme of this character gets footing, the glory of the gospel is departed, and souls perish in their sins, because there is no one to lead them to the foot of the cross. If then we have hearts to feel for the glory of God ; if we have any pity for the souls of men, or any desire for the welfare of the church, we should deplore the errors of the present day. And you will keep in mind, that the great effort of error, at this day, is not to oppose the Christian religion by name, but to free it from those doctrines, which offend the proud, alarm the impenitent, and forbid men to glory in the presence of God. This defective, spurious system we ought, brethren, to deplore, not because it stands against our opinions, or our party ; but because it deceives and ruins immortal souls ; and because it undermines that system of truth, which honours God our Saviour, and is destined to renovate the world.

Who that has learned his religion from the Bible, will ever tell us, that we overrate, or can overrate the doctrine of Christ crucified ? Who will attempt to make us ashamed of this ? Ashamed we may be of ourselves, and of one another. But never can we be ashamed of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We embrace it as our life. God forbid that we should glory in any thing else. Take away from us what you will ; only leave us this holy, heavenly doctrine. It is the basis of

our eternal hopes, the spring of our joys, the glory of our religion. In the best days of NEW ENGLAND, it was to all her ministers, *the grand theme of preaching*, and of all her churches, *the chief corner stone*. And so brethren it will be. We make no empty boast. The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it ; and the steady motion of the heavens is not more certain, than the accomplishment of his word. God will give us better days. His spirit will be copiously poured out upon our churches and Colleges, upon our cities, and our country. Christians will grow in grace. A host of faithful ministers will be raised up, whose ruling passion shall be love to Christ,—who shall publish the glad tidings, and extend far and wide the triumphs of the cross. Converts shall be numerous as the drops of morning dew. The everlasting gospel shall no more be a savour of death unto death. Hostility against its heavenly doctrines shall no more lift up its head. The glorious reign of Christ shall come. All the ends of the earth shall look to him and be saved, and a world of ransomed sinners join in songs of praise. The Lord will hasten it in his time.

To you, my dear brother, this subject, and this occasion must be deeply interesting. You are now to be set apart to the most sacred, the most honourable, the most delightful office. And in this office, you are permitted of heaven to occupy the place of a long succession of able and faithful ministers, who now rest from their labours : particularly of our dear lamented brother, who recently finished his work, and whose name will long be precious

to his people, and to his brethren in the ministry. In this honourable station, and in connexion with this beloved society, you will, we doubt not, make it your great business to preach Christ crucified ; to make known his glorious character, his atoning blood, and the unsearchable riches of his grace. What have you to do with the wisdom of this world, which cometh to nought ? with the excellency of speech ? with the enticing words of human eloquence ? with the fineries of learning, or the arts of popularity ? Let your people see, and let all the churches see, that you determine to know nothing among them, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Let them see that, while you teach all the truths and all the duties of religion, you teach them as Paul did, with your eye turned to the cross. The doctrine of Christ Crucified was a subject great enough for an Apostle ; and why should any of us search for a greater ? Christianity, my brother, is best alone,—pure from all mixture of human error and human passion. Let its divine simplicity ever charm your heart, while its sublimity and glory fill you with astonishment and rapture. Even in this metropolis, where the splendours of wealth, the refinements of literature, and the enchantments of fashionable error present so many temptations to those who bear the sacred office ; show that a minister of the gospel, by the help of God, can preach and live, as the apostle did. Better be any thing, than a minister *here*, unless you preach affectionately, discreetly and boldly, the doctrine of the cross. And let me say, my dear brother, that you need the influence of this doctrine

to subdue the evils of your own heart, and support you under the trials of the ministry. If at any time it fall to your lot to suffer injuries; look to Christ crucified, and learn to forgive. Be so imbued with the spirit of Christ, that whatever reproaches, or slanders, or personal abuses may come upon you from ungodly men, you will meditate no recompense but endeavours to do them good, and prayer to God that they may be saved. Should you begin to sink under affliction, to be weary of your labours, or to be discouraged for want of success; look to him who went about doing good, and was obedient and faithful unto death, and learn patience and perseverance. Should your heart ever tempt you to conceal the truth, or to remit your efforts in the ministry, for the sake of gaining the honours of the world, or shunning its reproaches; look to him, who counted worldly honours less than nothing, and willingly endured the cross, despising the shame. Should you lose sight of God, and walk in darkness; look up and see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Should you ever be oppressed with the weight of your guilt, and begin to be distressed with the apprehension that your sins are too great to be forgiven, and that at last, after all your privileges, your hopes and labours, you may lose your own soul; behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world. And whatever may be the condition of your flock, direct them to the same glorious object. Teach them to forget you, and look to Jesus. If you would enliven the graces of this church; if

you would excite its members to love one another, to be fervent in spirit, and to rejoice in hope; present before them in all its beauty, and in all its purifying, transforming power, the doctrine of the cross. Present the same before impenitent sinners, to show them their guilt and their doom; and before convinced, penitent sinners, to show them the only way of salvation.—This church rests on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. The Christians, to whom you are called to minister, love the doctrine of the cross. It is their refuge and their joy. They have built their hopes for eternity on Christ's atoning blood, and received of his fulness. We trust they love him so sincerely and ardently, that they are willing to endure all things for his sake. Both in prosperity, and in adversity, they have been near our hearts. And in the happiness they this day experience, thousands participate. God grant that you may ever come to them in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. God grant, you may have the joy of seeing parents and children pressing to the cross. And may he, who stooped down from his throne to die for men, and who has all power in heaven and earth, graciously dwell in this place. Here may the doctrine of Christ crucified never be forgotten. Here may his grace abound, his church flourish, and his infinite glory shine forth, while the sun and the moon endure. AMEN.



